LINCOLN PARK ZOO
FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.

Monkey Cognition Demonstration

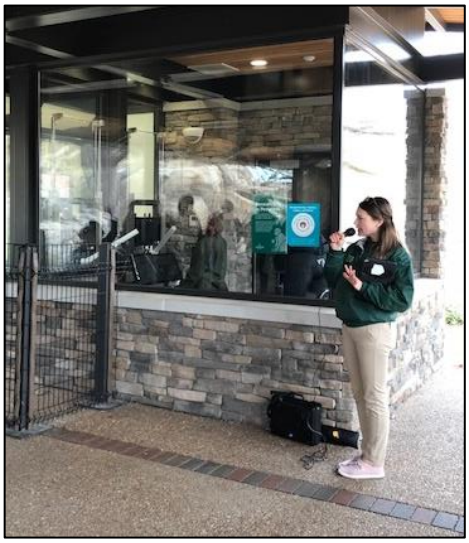
How to Use This Document

The following text is similar to what a presenter will say during a public demonstration. You may follow along, but please note that the exact wording and sequence will vary depending on staff and animal activity. Feel free to ask the presenter questions after the program. Thank you for joining us today!

Pre-Demonstration Announcement

Hello! Right now the monkeys are using a touchscreen computer with one of our researchers. If you're interested in learning more, please join me by the research booth and stay behind the red brick line on the ground. You may take a seat at the front or stand behind the people who are already seated. The demonstration will start shortly and will last five to ten minutes. If you have any questions before we begin, please let me know.

Introduction



Welcome to Regenstein Macaque Forest at Lincoln Park Zoo! My name is _____, and I'm with the Learning Team. Lincoln Park Zoo is home to one of the largest zoo-based conservation and science programs in North America. A key part of that is the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes. Researchers working with the Fisher Center study primates

in both the wild and here at the zoo. Today, our researchers are conducting a cognitive research session with the Japanese macaques. This is an opportunity to see researchers and animals working together to learn more about how primates think and feel.

Japanese macaques—also called snow monkeys—have a longer history of field research than any other primate species. By observing them in the wild, researchers have learned that Japanese macaques live in social groups, that they have a rigid social hierarchy, and that they show some of the clearest examples of animal culture. However, we know very little about what is going on inside of their minds. The cognitive research done at Lincoln Park Zoo is designed to help us better understand how they think and feel.

Research Booth Set-Up

One of the methods that Fisher Center researchers use to explore primate learning and behavior is a touchscreen computer. The researchers can draw conclusions as to how primates learn and remember by observing how the macaques solve puzzles on the computer. What we learn from these studies helps us to continuously improve animal care here at the zoo.

The touchscreen computer sessions take place in the research booth on the far right side of the exhibit. To enter the booth, the monkeys push through a door that swings back and forth, like a doggie door. The session is always voluntary, so they can leave the session at any time. Some individuals may choose not to participate at all.

Sometimes, more than one monkey will enter the research booth at the same time. When this happens, the researcher puts a blank screen on the computer instead of a puzzle. That way, only one monkey will use the computer at a time, allowing the researchers to collect accurate data. Monkeys will also see a blank screen when they have finished their turn for the day.

You might notice that the researcher is wearing a facemask and gloves. Japanese macaques are primates, just like humans, so germs can pass easily between us. The researcher wears this equipment to keep everyone healthy during the session.

Learning Through Positive Reinforcement

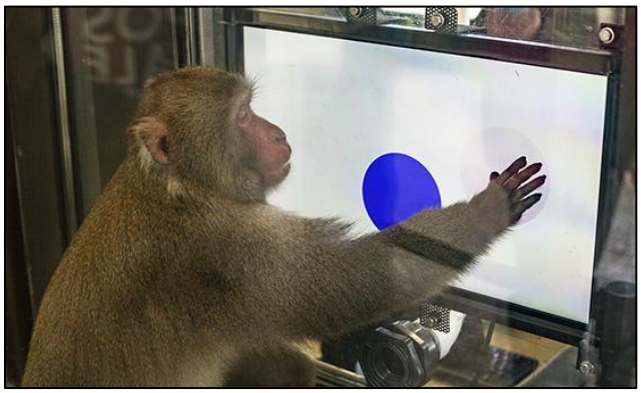
Researchers didn't teach the monkeys how to use the computers. The monkeys had to learn on their own through a process called positive reinforcement. Each time they solve the puzzle correctly, they receive a highly preferred, veterinarian-approved food reward, such as blueberries or peanuts. If they do not solve the puzzle correctly, that's OK! They will have another chance to solve the puzzle and earn the food reward.

Benefits

The researchers use welfare-based puzzles here at the zoo. This means that each puzzle offered to the monkeys is designed to help us learn more about them, including information about their personality and preferences. Animal care staff can use this information to make sure

that we continue to provide the best care possible for each individual monkey.

The macaques have already learned several puzzles. Examples include touching shapes and colors in a certain sequence, or choosing pictures of food items that would like to receive. For today's session, look at the researcher's computer or the TV screens above your head to see which puzzle the macaques are working on. You might see several different puzzles today, because each monkey learns at their own pace. Some monkeys might be on more complex puzzles than others.



These cognition puzzles also provide an immediate benefit to the monkeys by offering new choices and challenges, keeping their minds healthy and engaged. At the zoo, this is called "enrichment."

Pause Before Posting

Research with primates has shown that they have complex needs, and therefore don't make good pets. They thrive under expert care in a zoo, but not in private homes. Keeping primates as a pet is unhealthy for them and dangerous to people, and the illegal pet trade harms wild primate populations.

Lincoln Park Zoo researchers have studied the impact of seeing images of primates as pets and performers. They found that people who viewed such images were less likely to think about the threats facing primates in the wild, and less interested in conserving them.

To help end the primate pet trade, you can pause before posting. Avoid sharing images or videos of primates as pets and performers. If you are traveling, do not pose for photos with primates or pay to see them living in poor conditions.

Conclusion

The researchers and monkeys will continue to work together for a few more minutes, so I encourage you to continue watching. I hope you have enjoyed learning how researchers are using technology to see into the world of Japanese macaques. Once again, my name is _____, and I'm with the Learning team. Please find me if you have any questions. Thanks for being here! Your support helps us conserve wildlife.